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## ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT, MISS ISABEL McISAAC, BEFORE THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF NURSES, HELD IN BUFFALO, SEPTEMBER 18-21, 1901

MISS McISAAC, after graceful acknowledgments for the addresses of welcome, spoke as follows:

"In approaching the discharge of my duties as presiding officer of this third International Congress of Nurses, I beg to express my appreciation of the generosity by which I have been called to such an honor.

"This appreciation becomes all the more pronounced when I reflect upon the conspicuous achievements of my predecessors and colleagues in all lands, who have labored zealously and with beneficent results, not alone in nursing fields, but in behalf of organization, to guard which must be one object of our labors upon this occasion.

"It requires a pen and tongue far more eloquent than mine to do justice to the feelings which arise when we consider the significance of this gathering. Every meeting of this kind is a record of our progress, and by each one we may determine how far forward or how far backward we have gone. When we look back upon all the great movements of the world we should never lose sight of the one great fact, that a cause which is righteous is never wholly lost. It may be obscured and neglected, individual effort may fail, but the time will come when it is carried to success.

"If the phenomenal growth of nursing is any indication of its righteousness, then who can doubt our future? Small wonder that our pioneers, some of whom are still with us, express themselves as sometimes awed by the mighty impetus of the ball they started rolling scarcely more than a generation ago. The story of our beginning is so near to us that it is too well known to need repetition—our history so short that it is soon told.

"To our English colleagues we of the United States owe more than we can ever repay, and if in our swift American fashion we have broken from their leading-strings and made paths for ourselves, we none the less acknowledge our indebtedness with gratitude, and display our accomplishments with the same pride, mingled with a little doubt, with which sons and daughters display theirs to the friends at home. The tie of common speech and common interests is a strong one, even in the every-day work of commerce, but when the mutual interests concern life and death, the tie grows in strength and engenders a peculiar feeling of sympathy and kinship.

"Our first International gathering in Chicago in 1893 was marked very distinctly by the making of acquaintance, which sounds rather insignificant, but on second thought assumes its proper place, and we realize that it signified a tremendous force in nursing affairs. The exchange of experiences suddenly roused many women to the fact that the deficiencies and difficulties of their work were peculiar to the whole nursing profession, and not to one school or hospital. To that meeting we owe the greater part of the progress which has been made since then, in America at least, and we will devoutly hope that from this Congress may come as much that is good and great.

"Any number of the problems taken up for discussion then still confront us in both continents,—the uniform requirements for admission to our schools, the uniform curriculum, what shall constitute a trained nurse, State registration, local and national organization, a code of ethics, and many minor questions.

"In America the extension of the training course from two to three years is nearer an accomplished fact than any other question, and while the curriculum is far nearer uniformity than it was eight years ago, there is still much to be desired.

"The question as to what constitutes a trained nurse seems farther from settlement in this country than at any time before. We Americans have strongly what the French call 'the faults of our qualities.' In our nervous energy and haste to embrace all things new and to get to the end by a short cut we often sacrifice quality and thoroughness to speed, and in no other work is this more glaring than in the enormous increase of so-called training-schools which have neither educational nor moral right to exist. We will listen with much interest and eagerness to our foreign delegates upon this subject, for it is one of extreme gravity to our profession. The establishment of a chair of Hospital Economics in Columbia University has been one of our most important undertakings, originating with the nurse who has done more for our profession in America than any other one woman. The Columbia

course will undoubtedly be a most valuable leaven for the whole lump, and I may say, with no fear of giving offence, that the superintendents themselves know better than anyone else the great need of better teachers of nursing. We cannot hope for improvement in pupils without a greater improvement in the heads of our schools. The organizations for nurses all over the world have developed wonderfully, and while we occasionally hear expressions of discouragement, we should not forget that we have learned much by contact, and should see our deficiencies now far more clearly than formerly, and if we continue to struggle for better things, a 'noble discontent' with ourselves is the very best stimulus we can have.

"A topic new to the nurses of the United States since our first meeting, although an old one in England, is army nursing—a huge problem undertaken here in an emergency, and one in which we sadly acknowledge we have not always done ourselves credit, nor, perhaps, always given credit where it may have been due. In this, alas, our friends across the sea share with us some of the same humiliation; but if all experience is good for us, then we should listen with open hearts and minds to those who can point out a better way for our future guidance, and take the criticism we deserve with the right spirit. For, after all is said and done, the roots of our shortcomings existed before the Spanish-American or South-African Wars.

"An undertaking of which we are justly proud is *THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING*. To paraphrase our great Lincoln, 'a journal of nursing, for nurses and by nurses,' the work of which has been entirely done, until within a few weeks, by nurses hard worked in other lines. A monument to the courage and devotion of American nurses, we recognize it as a tremendous factor for good, and that, whatever its standards and influence, it is and will be what nurses make it.

"Again I beg to express our thanks to our cordial hosts of Buffalo, and to extend to the distinguished guests within our gates who share with us this undertaking the hand of fellowship, and felicitate them upon their achievements in our great profession."

